

CROP AND WEATHER SUMMARY - 1998

January was a mild month with near average rainfall. The colder December 1997 temperatures retreated with January temperatures averaging 42 degrees, 10 degrees above normal. This average indicates that January 1998 is one of the top 10 warmest Januarys on record, tied with January 1990 for the 7th warmest since 1895. Extensive rainfall in the first weeks of January provided surplus soil moisture and created some flooding in low lying areas. Drier weather after mid-month allowed the State to return to normal with 3.48 inches statewide, 0.29 inches above normal.

February saw mild temperatures continuing with temperatures averaging 43 degrees across the State which was 7 degrees above normal. Precipitation for the month was below normal despite a heavy snowfall in the eastern three-fourths of the State in the first week, 18 - 24 inches of snow left many areas without electricity for several days. Despite the snowfall the State was below normal with an average precipitation for the month that totaled 3.04 inches statewide, which was 0.49 inches below normal.

March continued the mild conditions and below normal precipitation of previous winter months, arctic air invaded the State at mid-month causing some concern for the wheat crop. Overall the temperatures for March averaged 47 degrees across the State which was 2 degrees above normal. Some rainfall events occurred but snowfall was short for most of Kentucky. Precipitation for the month totaled 3.04 inches statewide which was 1.54 inches below normal.

April began with very warm temperatures but by mid-month had dropped to near normal and finished out the month below normal. The drastic swing in temperatures resulted in an average temperature of 55 degrees across the State which was 1 degree below normal. Accompanying the drop in temperatures at mid-month were heavy rains, violent storms, and several tornadoes. The remainder of the month had surplus soil moisture statewide and the threat of flooding and flash flooding. Rainfall for the month totaled 7.87 inches statewide which was 3.66 inches above normal.

May weather continued where April ended with the first half of the month remaining cool and rainy, and little to no fieldwork accomplished. No frosts were recorded during the month but extreme low temperatures plunged to the low to mid 40's on the 5th. By mid-month the rains subsided and temperatures began to rise allowing a resumption of planting and transplanting. Temperatures averaged 69 degrees across the State which was 2 degrees above normal. Rainfall for May 1998 totaled 4.81 inches statewide which was 0.11 inches above normal.

Little fieldwork was accomplished in **June**. Soils were saturated due to the late May rains and the continuing rain throughout June. Precipitation for the month totaling 9.25 inches statewide which was 5.43 inches above normal. The first half of the month remained cool, by mid-month the temperature had swung to above normal and remained above normal. The average temperature was 74 degrees across the State which was 1 degree above normal.

July was a very wet and cool month for most of Kentucky. Temperatures for the month averaged 76 degrees across the State which was near normal. Weekly temperatures averaged from slightly below and slightly above normal each week. However, most locations only recorded 1 or 2 days where the daily high temperature equaled or exceeded 90 degrees which is 6 or 12 days less than normal, depending on the location. Rainfall in July was significant enough that some lowlands remained flooded throughout the month after the excessive rains in June. Precipitation for the month totaled 5.06 inches statewide which was 0.38 inches above normal.

After the 3rd wettest June and July (combined) in Kentucky on record, **August**, rainfall was nearly 2 inches below normal with some areas suffering the driest August on record. Temperatures for August 1998 averaged 76 degrees across the State, which was 2 degrees above normal. There were several hot, muggy days where the daily high temperature exceeded 90 degrees but this was generally less than 8 days. There were no days where the daily high temperature equaled or exceeded 100 degrees. Rainfall for August 1998 totaled 2.02 inches statewide which was 1.71 inches below normal. One final irony, even after a dry August, the months of June, July, and August combined was the fourth wettest summer (17.20") on record back to 1896 (1928 was the wettest summer statewide with 19.05, 1930 the driest summer with 5.06").

September drought conditions with much above normal temperatures and much below normal rainfall continued to plague the State since the first week in August. Late planted soybeans and late tobacco exhibited stress due to the weather. Temperatures for September averaged 74 degrees across the State which was 6 degrees above normal. Rainfall for the month totaled 1.15 inches statewide which was 2.30 inches below normal.

October temperatures remained above normal. However, the mild, dry conditions aided harvest operations. Temperatures for October averaged 60 degrees across the State which was 2 degrees above normal. The first statewide frost hit the State the last full week of October. Precipitation for the month totaled 2.79 inches statewide which was 0.24 inches below normal.

The first full week of *November* was unseasonably cool, but the remainder of the month was dominated by very mild temperatures. Harvesting rapidly neared completion with the excellent weather conditions. Temperatures for the month averaged 49 degrees across the State which was 3 degrees above normal. The warmest November was 1931, with an average monthly temperature of 53.7 degrees. Three out of four weeks were dry in November, but significant rainfall fell the second full week, boosting that week to near normal. Precipitation for the month totaled 2.12 inches statewide which was 1.81 inches below normal. The driest November was 1976 with 0.85 inches.

Most of *December* received mild-to-seasonable temperatures except the final week, which suffered from a major winter storm and bitter cold temperatures. Temperatures for the month averaged 41 degrees across the State which was 5 degrees above normal. Extreme low temperatures plunged into the single digits during the final week of December. Precipitation for the month totaled 4.52 inches statewide, which was 0.30 inches above normal. Snowfall during the last week of the month totaled from 1 - 4 inches statewide with ½ to 1 inch of freezing rain in the Southern half of the State.

Condensed version of narrative provided by Tom Priddy, Kentucky Extension Agricultural Meteorologist, University of Kentucky Agricultural Weather Center. Additional Kentucky weather data are available on the internet at:
<http://www.wagwx.ca.uky.edu/>